

Lessingham and Hempstead with Eccles Parish Council

Action points from the virtual Parish Council meeting, which concluded on 12th January 2021. Due to Coronavirus and the need to maintain social distancing, the business of the Parish Council is being conducted remotely, with decisions made by email or telephone. These notes include any comments and views on agenda items received by the clerk by 7.30pm on Tuesday 12th January 2021.

Commenting: Cllr White
Cllr Henderson
Cllr Reynolds
Cllr Cull
Cllr Moore
Cllr Holden
Cllr Bennett

Others: Cllr Shires (NNDC)
Cllr Price (NCC)
Nicky Debbage – Parish Clerk

1. Apologies and approval of absence

No apologies.

2. Declaration of Interests / requests for dispensations

No declarations.

3. To approve as accurate minutes of the last meeting of the Parish Council

The minutes of the virtual meeting held on 8th December 2020 were approved as a true record.
Proposed by Cllr White, seconded by Cllr Henderson

4. Matters Arising

The Clerk reported that she had contacted NCC Highways asking for a clear response regarding whether the Parish Council could designate the bridleway as a carriageway (and whether this would achieve anything) and if it is legal for the Parish Council to contribute to the repair of a bridleway for it to be used as a carriageway – a response had been promised but not yet received.

Cllr Henderson agreed this issue should be put on hold until it can be discussed collectively. Cllr Henderson felt that other parishioners did not use Church Lane to access the beach as the roads in the estate are private and there is no parking. Rather she felt local people go to the beach via Cart Gap or North Gap and that it is people from outside the parish who have parked in Bush Estate for the beach.

Cllr Henderson suggested that no key decision should be made until the PC could physically meet once again. Cllr Bennett highlighted the NALC bullet-in information "For any councils not holding any meetings, obviously care is also needed to ensure that councillors do not accidentally fall foul of the

'six-month rule' and automatically vacate office under s85, Local Government Act 1972" and queried if not making decisions might mean all councillors be deemed to have resigned. Cllr Henderson clarified that she did not intend to infer that no decisions should be made; just that a decision which might involve the council in a long-term commitment should be held over.

Cllr Bennett queried what the PC position was with respect to the May 2021 (by) elections as he was aware there are other people who may want to stand for election as Parish Councillor. The clerk clarified that there would only be an election for the PC if there was a vacancy on the Council and more than one person stood for that vacancy. Existing councillors were not due for re-election in 2021.

5. Progress and information reports

Cllr Bennett shared data from the analysis of the electoral roll of registered voters for the Parish. It would appear that Eccles represents 59% (285), Lessingham 32% (154) and Hempstead 7% (36) of all parishioners registered to vote. Cllr Bennett highlighted that in addition to the overwhelming majority of registered voters, there are also a large number of holiday properties and businesses in Eccles that all pay council tax and contribute towards our precept.

Cllr Bennett also provided information in response to an anonymous letter relating to the roads on Bush Estate to clarify the current position. "I have set up the Eccles Community Road Group (ECRG) to help the residents of the estate to organise themselves to repair the roads. To date, the group has received over 50 financial contributions and physical help from more than a dozen people to undertake the road repairs. My role is to promote and organise the group, I cannot take on the responsibility to repair all of the roads myself.

Over the past few months, the group has purchased and laid over 40 tonnes of new materials (MOT Type 1 crushed granite) and made a good start to repair some of the worst sections of the roads. Before the new materials can be put down the existing road surface needs to be levelled with the high spots being used to fill some of the potholes. In some cases (especially Bush Drive where I live) this has had the effect of making some of the puddles shallower and wider. Where possible we have endeavoured to keep or make a pathway along the edge of the puddles specifically for people, myself included, to walk along (with our dogs).

The large puddles on Bush Drive have recently had 20 tonnes of new materials in them with a plan to purchase a further 20 tonnes when enough funds have been raised. This material has been paid for largely by the property owners on Bush Drive and those that were available and able also helped to level the road too.

The plan is to set up a community bank account to allow property owners and residents to make a regular contribution and this money will be used to purchase the materials that are needed to continue to repair the roads. The roads all started out in a very bad state and many of them are still in a bad state and they will not be fixed overnight, but some good progress has already been made.

The responsibility for the roads remains with the property owners and not me or the ECRG. The purpose of the group is merely to organise and assist the community to help themselves."

Cllr Henderson commented that by its nature the PC cannot respond to an anonymous letter and that in her experience over the years when someone tries to bring about repairs to the roads there is always a complaint from someone. The council have tried to offer support but in the end it is a private affair for the residents.

Cllr Henderson also reported that it is unlikely there will be a paper edition of the Parish magazine next month and that it will be on line, but previous evidence was there is only a low uptake.

6. Public participation

There were no issues raised by members of the public (beyond those in the correspondence folder / on the agenda)

7. Planning

No planning issues.

8. SAM2 Overview report

Cllr Moore had circulated an overview report showing results from the various locations the SAM2 had been positioned over the preceding 3 months. The worst location for speeding is at Grange Farm (Ingham Road, heading North) where the maximum recorded speed was 65mph with 46% of vehicles exceeding the limit.

Councillor Henderson wished to record thanks to Cllr Moore for his work and analysis. Councillors queried how his information might be used to help make the case for more permanent speeding controls through the village - such as flashing warning signs when entering the 30mph zone?

Action – Clerk to send SAM2 information to Police and also to other parishes to compare information.

9. Quarterly budget report

The Clerk circulated the 3rd quarter budget position report – in summary this showed income for 2020/21 of £4k and spend, as at end of December, of £2,864.46.

10. Correspondence for information/discussion

The full set of correspondence had been circulated to councillors.

11. Finance

The following payments were authorised:

- Clerk's Salary - £104 (cheque number 100983)
- HMRC PAYE - £26 (cheque number 100984)

The Chair proposed these payments be agreed, seconded by Cllr Bennett

12. AOB - agenda items for next meeting